

St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School



Early Years Policy

'Learn to Love, Love to Learn'

Mission Statement

“At St Bernadette’s Catholic School you will find us caring, hardworking and cooperative. We follow the ways of Jesus using our talents and gifts to make our school special. We show respect to all and welcome you.”

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- GDPR
- Health and Safety
- Intimate Care
- ICT Acceptable Use Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- SEND
- Computing Acceptable Use

Intent

St. Bernadette's Catholic Primary School is a beacon of hope and a place that offers children an education rich in wonder and memorable experiences. We believe all children deserve an education that allows their natural curiosity and creativity to flourish, alongside the purposeful acquisition of skills and knowledge. We want our children to succeed in our ever-changing world, we hope our education gives our children the best chance to become happy and well-rounded individuals, reaching their full potential and fostering our school motto, 'Love to Learn, Learn to Love'.

At St. Bernadette's Catholic Primary School, we recognise that every child is unique; we welcome and celebrate differences and our curriculum is designed to recognise children's diverse range of experiences and prior learning from their previous settings and their home environment. We know the crucial role that early years education has to play in providing firm foundations upon which the rest of a child's education is successfully based.

It is our intention to provide an enriched, rounded, safe and stimulating learning environment, where children can work with adults and peers in a climate of mutual respect and trust. We work in partnership with parents and carers to encourage independent, happy learners who thrive at school. Our curriculum is driven by our four fundamental EYFS curriculum drivers:

EYFS Curriculum Drivers

Learn to Love, Love to Learn

We want children's curiosity and creativity to be nurtured so their love for learning is ignited. Through developing learning behaviours such as playing and exploring, active learning and creating and thinking critically, we want children to be autonomous with their own learning. We want them to plan, implement and review this process and do it with integrity and become successful, lifelong learners.

Communication

Communication and language skills are the cornerstone of learning. We want our children to be able to speak clearly and process speech sounds, express their ideas and to understand and interact with others. We want them to develop an enriched vocabulary and a lifelong love for reading. Communication is the vehicle for learning, making friends and succeeding in life.

Community

We want our children to develop a sense of pride in themselves and respect for others in their immediate and school community, as well as the world that is beyond their immediate environment. They need opportunities to experience the richness of our diverse community and show they care about its management and sustainability. We want to cultivate partnerships with families and engagement in their child's lifelong learning journey. We want children to develop a sense of citizenship in line with British Values. We follow the Values and Virtues from the Archdiocese of Birmingham's Catholic Schools' Pupil Profile, we

see them in action in our lives and in the lives of others and we work on how to encapsulate these values in our lives.

Possibilities

We are passionate about broadening the horizons of our children, providing rich learning opportunities and experiences to develop imagination, curiosity, creativity and ingenuity. Our children cannot aspire to things that they have never encountered, we want to expand their knowledge of the world in which we live.

Implementation

At St. Bernadette's Catholic Primary School, we follow the Early Years Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage. The framework specifies the requirements and development in the EYFS. All areas of the EYFS curriculum are followed and planned for to ensure there is a broad, balanced and progressive learning environment and curriculum, with a specific focus on the prime areas which are important for building a foundation for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, forming relationships, and thriving. The children will learn new skills, acquire new knowledge and demonstrate understanding through the seven areas of the EYFS curriculum:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Physical Development
- Communication and Language,
- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

Our curriculum is judiciously balanced, with a focus on the knowledge and skills children need to flourish. It is based on wonder and awe, delivered through topics which engage the children. Each half term, children will cover a new topic, and they are given the opportunity to influence and plan the direction of their own learning by identifying what they already know, understand and would like to know about each new topic of work. Each topic is then flexibly delivered, incorporating an initial 'Sparky Start' to 'hook' the children's imagination in their new topic. At the end of each topic of work, children are given the opportunity to evaluate their learning and celebrate their achievements and this celebration is often shared with parents and carers. We ensure that we build solid relationships with the children, so we know their interest and likes to support learning.

A vital aspect in the development of essential knowledge and skills is the use of continuous provision. This gives children the opportunity to use and develop skills taught throughout the year on a daily basis. Continuous provision supports children to develop key life skills such as independence, innovation, creativity, enquiry, analysis, and problem solving, as well as social and communication skills.

During the school day, children will have an opportunity to work independently and work collaboratively with their friends and with members of staff. Daily guided activities are also planned to cover different areas of the EYFS curriculum and allow children to develop their next steps in learning. There are also a range of stimulating and engaging enhancements to the continuous provision which the children can access independently and a variety of opportunities for child-initiated play. In planning and guiding children's activities, we reflect on the different ways that children learn and reflect these in our practice. Adult interaction and the learning environment; including continuous provision, support children to reach their next stage in their individual learning journey. Termly, we complete summative assessments - these judgements are made on the basis of accumulative observations and in-depth knowledge of the children acquired through ongoing, high-quality interactions and assessments. We will include interventions for groups or individuals if and when necessary, and ensure that the next stage of the children's learning journey is developed through quality first teaching.

Communication and language skills are the cornerstone of learning. We support this through structured language interventions such as Neli and Wellcomm, as well as using Makaton and Concept Cat. We ensure that our children develop an enriched vocabulary through the use of tiered vocabulary and ambitious word of the week, which is also shared with parents and carers to use at home. We ensure we provide high quality interactions continually throughout the day, using various strategies to support this such as commenting, extending, scripting, confirming, pausing and most importantly getting down to the children's level when interacting with them. We use the 'Communication Supporting Classrooms Observation Tool' to profile the oral language environment of our classrooms and identify areas of development from this profile. We foster a love of reading, through our reading and rhyme spine and high quality story time.

Children in EYFS learn by playing and exploring, being active, and through creative and critical thinking which takes place both indoors and outside. Our outdoor areas are used all year round and in most weather conditions. We ensure activities support the Characteristics of Effective Learning to ensure learning takes place. These are:

Playing and Exploring – children investigate and experience things, and have a go;
Active Learning – children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements;
Creating and Thinking Critically – children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas and develop strategies for doing things.

'What children learn is important, but how children learn is even more important if they are to become learners in today's society.' Helen Moylett
How Children Learn, Nancy Stewart (2011)

We provide regular opportunities for parents and carers to come into school and work with their child, share their work and celebrate successes. We keep parents informed and we meet regularly with them to ensure children's transition into school and through the EYFS is happy and allows them to reach their potential with the support needed. This includes transition days, Nursery or home visits, stay and play sessions, parent workshops, open

week, Bedtime Story Sessions, Proud Clouds, Friday Reading Sessions, regular communication via Seesaw, reports and parent consultations as well as more frequent informal communication to suit individual families. We also support the transition into Key Stage 1 for both child and parents. We prepare children for Year 1 with visits to their new class, meeting the teacher and ensuring the environments are similar at the end of EYFS and the start of Year 1.

Impact

At St. Bernadette's Catholic Primary School, our children have varied starting points - often a large proportion of vulnerable starters enter our setting below their age related expectations. However, we strive for all our children to reach the Early Learning Goals at the end of Reception and strive to be at least in line with National Data. The last two academic years where data has been published, we have been just slightly below National Data for a Good Level of Development, 2018 – 70.1% and 2019 – 70.5%. The impact of our curriculum is measured continually throughout the year and through termly assessments. Termly, we discuss those pupils on track or not on track to meet end of year expectations, we identify vulnerable learners and we put supportive interventions in place and enhancements to the provision if and when needed. Class teachers use observations and high-quality day to day interactions to make formative assessments which inform future planning and ensure that all children build on their current knowledge and skills. Our assessment judgements are moderated both in school and externally with local schools in our Sursum Corda Cluster. The impact of our curriculum will also be measured by how effectively it helps our pupils develop into well rounded individuals who embody our values and carry with them the knowledge, skills and attitudes which will make them lifelong learners and valuable future citizens, through our EYFS curriculum drivers. We endeavour for pupils to be Key Stage 1 ready and have our school values embedded by the time they leave reception, preparing them for their future.

With the successful implementation of our judiciously enriched and balanced curriculum and a well-structured, safe, active and challenging learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, our children develop the skills, knowledge and understanding that enables them to be successful, lifelong learners. They are fully prepared for the next stage of their education as they transition from Foundation Stage to Year One. Children are actively engaged in learning and their enjoyment of this learning is apparent to all. All children experience a curriculum that provides, exciting and enriching learning experiences and opportunities to learn through educational visits and hands on experiences. Children fully appreciate and understand the world around them, experiencing, through our topics, different cultures, music, dance, art and history. Children actively ask questions about the world around them and their learning experiences and they never fear making a mistake but instead see this as an opportunity to learn. Children can make links with their learning and develop their skills as they are able to use and apply skills learnt within their learning across the curriculum. Children are aware of the world around them, develop tolerance, compassion and an understanding of their rights and the rights of others in an ever evolving world. Children at St. Bernadette's Catholic Primary School 'Love to Learn, Learn to Love' and are successful, lifelong learners.

A Unique Child

At St. Bernadette's Catholic Primary School we recognise that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We recognise that children develop in individual ways, at varying rates. Children's attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from others; we use praise and encouragement, stickers, prizes, positive reinforcement, good role models as well as celebration assemblies and rewards, to encourage children to develop a positive attitude and love of learning.

Inclusion

We value the diversity of individuals within the school and do not discriminate against children because of 'differences'. All children at St. Bernadette's are treated fairly regardless of race, religion or abilities. All children and their families are valued within our school. In our school we believe that all our children matter. We give our children every opportunity to achieve their best. We do this by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when planning for their learning. In the EYFS we set realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of our children. We achieve this by planning to meet the needs of all children, including those children with special educational needs and disabilities, children who are more able, children from all social and cultural backgrounds, children of different ethnic groups and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy ensures all children receive the support they need and are given the best learning experience possible. SEND in the EYFS setting will be monitored and managed by the school's SENCO.

The EYFS curriculum is planned in order to meet the needs of the individual child and support them at their own pace. We meet the needs of all our children through:

- planning opportunities that build upon and extend children's knowledge, experience and interests, and develop their self-esteem and confidence;
- using a wide range of teaching strategies based on children's learning needs;
- providing a wide range of opportunities to motivate and support children and to help them to learn effectively;
- providing a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued;
- using resources which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping;
- planning challenging activities for children whose ability and understanding are in advance of their language and communication skills;
- regular, detailed reporting to parents about their child's progress and feedback from parents about their child's development;
- monitoring children's progress and taking action to provide support as necessary.
- identifying those children with SEND quickly, promptly receiving any extra support they need, so they can progress well in their learning.

Where staff feel that a child is not progressing in line with his/her peers they will speak to parents in the first instance to seek their opinion and to discuss how the child can best be helped. Where children are identified as needing extra support within the setting this involves the SENCO, the parents/carers and the child's key person working together to write a plan to identify how the child will be given extra support. We liaise very closely with outside agencies, including Health Visitors, the School Nurse, Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Educational Psychologists, Educational Welfare Officers, Social Workers, Foster Carers, Paediatricians, Dieticians, GP's and anyone else we feel will be able to support and help the child and their parents or carers. We will ensure that the requirements of all pupils with SEND are met, e.g. through reasonable adjustments.

Positive Relationships

At St. Bernadette's School we recognise that children learn to be strong and independent from secure relationships. We aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families.

Parents and Carers as Partners

We recognise that parents and carers are children's first and most enduring educators and we value the contribution they make. We recognise the role that parents and carers have played, and their future role, in educating the children. We do this through:

- talking to parents and carers about their child before their child starts in our school;
- the children having the opportunity to spend time with their teacher before starting school during 'Transition Day', through visits to school;
- inviting all parents and carers to an induction meeting during the term before their child starts school;
- offering parents and carers regular opportunities to talk about their child's progress in our Nursery and Reception classes;
- encouraging parents and carers to talk to the child's teacher if there are any concerns. There are two formal meetings for parents at which the teacher and the parent discuss the child's progress in private. Parents receive a report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of each term;
- arranging a range of activities throughout the year that encourage collaboration between child, school and parents: Stay and Play Sessions, Behaviour Assemblies, Nativity Play, Workshops, Bedtime Story Session, Friday reading sessions, Book Looks, Maths Open Week, Sports Day etc;
- operating an open door policy for parents with concerns or queries;
- providing parents with 'Proud Clouds' so they can comment on their children's achievements at home. 'Proud Clouds' are where significant events that happen at home can be recorded, they are available in each cloakroom and can be taken home to complete or can be completed with the support of a member of staff.

All staff involved with the EYFS aim to develop good relationships with all children, interacting positively with them and taking time to listen and respond to them. The child's experience is always central to the thinking of all staff; our staff enjoy spending time, play and interacting with children in our setting.

Enabling Environments

At St. Bernadette's we recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. This begins by observing the children and assessing their interests, development and learning, before planning challenging but achievable activities and experiences to extend the children's learning.

The Learning Environment

The EYFS classroom is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. The environment is language rich, with high quality interactions, language learning opportunities and a language learning environment. The classrooms are set up in learning areas, where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently. Nursery and Reception have their own enclosed outdoor space. In Nursery, physical activity often dominates, with climbing, running, cycling and other active games being key. Reception have a smaller outdoor area so often have more physical play during break and lunch time, they have a P.E. session once a week. This has a positive effect on the children's development. Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors and support gross motor development. It offers the children opportunities to explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant. We plan activities and resources for the children to access the outdoors that help the children to develop in all seven areas of learning. In the outdoor environment we provide children with a wide variety of child initiated activities and opportunities to work independently and collaboratively both on large and small scales. We value the outdoor environment as an integral learning area for all children with unrestricted access. The outdoor area is used in all weather helping children to develop their skills and knowledge of the world around them. The area promotes creativity, investigation, problem solving, enables them to build and practise skills, develop communication, collaboration, active learning and enjoyment. As well as using our outdoor areas, we also have regular access to The Wildlife Trust EcoPark. Hidden in the middle of a built-up inner-city area, just a short walk from school, EcoPark is a secret wildlife oasis. EcoPark offers opportunities for children to get hands on with nature and discover the wonders of the natural world for the first time. Children in Reception have the opportunity to visit weekly, undertaking many outdoor educational opportunities; pond dipping and den building to name a few.

Learning and Development

In partnership with parents, the school promotes the learning and development of pupils to ensure they are ready for the next stage of education.

The EYFS provision and practice is based on an observation of children's needs, interests and stages of development. Learning and development in school are planned to reflect these interests and individual circumstances in order to provide each child with a challenging and enjoyable experience.

There are seven areas of learning and development that must shape education programmes in EYFS settings. These are split into two important and interconnected sections – prime and specific:

The 'prime' areas of learning and development are:

- Communication and language:

- Listening, attention and understanding
- Speaking
- Physical development:
 - Gross motor skills
 - Fine motor skills
- Personal, social and emotional development:
 - Self-regulation
 - Managing self
 - Building relationships

These areas are particularly crucial for igniting children’s curiosity and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

The ‘specific’ areas of learning and development are:

- Literacy:
 - Comprehension
 - Word reading
 - Writing
- Mathematics:
 - Numbers
 - Numerical patterns
- Understanding the world:
 - Past and present
 - People, culture and communities
 - The natural world
- Expressive arts and design:
 - Creating with materials
 - Being imaginative and expressive

We deliver learning for all of the areas through purposeful play and learning experiences, with a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Although much of the time is spent with children self-selecting tasks, the interaction between the adult and child is essential as the adult’s response to the children builds understanding and therefore guides new learning. The adult’s role is to continually model, demonstrate and question what the child is doing. In some cases the adult will ask a child to come and complete a task or game with them; at other times they will participate in play with the child, extending it where possible and following their interests. Throughout the year, the children in Reception will experience many more adult directed tasks as they prepare for their transition to Year 1.

At St. Bernadette’s we recognise that children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates. We value all areas of learning and development equally and understand that they are inter connected.

Observation, Assessment and Planning

The planning within the EYFS follows the school’s Curriculum Map which is based around half termly topics. These plans are used by the EYFS team as a guide for weekly planning; however the teacher may alter these in response to the needs (achievements and interests) of the children. This will be indicated on weekly planning. We make regular assessments of

children's learning and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs. Assessment in the EYFS takes the form of both formal and informal observation, and this involves the teacher and other adults as appropriate. These observations may be recorded in children's Learning Journey or on Seesaw. They also contain information provided by parents.

Reception baseline assessment (RBA)

The RBA is statutory and is carried out within the first six weeks of pupils starting school. It is an activity-based, age-appropriate assessment of a pupil's ability in language, communication and literacy and maths. It takes approximately 20 minutes per pupil and is administered by a Reception teacher. The RBA is used to create a baseline for school-level progress measures and will measure the progress pupils make from Reception until the end of Year 6. Pupils will not 'pass' or 'fail' and no numerical score will be shared. Staff will receive a series of short, narrative statements that tell them how their pupils performed in the assessment and this will be shared with parents.

EYFS profile

The EYFS Profile is a comprehensive assessment completed at the end of the EYFS to provide a well-rounded picture of a child's knowledge, understanding and abilities, attainment against the early learning goals (ELGs), and their readiness for Year 1. The school reports EYFS Profile results to the LA. The LA is under a duty to return this data to the relevant government department.

Moderation

Staff will ensure that internal moderation is carried out; for example, this could include two members of staff having informal discussions regarding evidence of a pupil's development or could include moderation meetings as a keystage. We also moderate with schools in our Sursum Corda cluster.

Characteristics of Effective Learning

In organising and implementing our curriculum, the school will ensure that a broad range of activities and experiences are planned, having regard to three characteristics of effective teaching and learning in the EYFS:

- Playing and exploring - children will have opportunities to investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'. 'Children's play reflects their wide ranging and varied interests and preoccupations. In their play children learn at their highest level. Play with peers is important for children's development.' Through play, our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. They practise and build up ideas, learn how to control themselves and understand the need for rules. They have the opportunity to think creatively alongside other children as well as on their own. They communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems.
- Active learning - children will have time and space to concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy their achievements. 'Children learn best through physical and mental challenges. Active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that engage and involve children for sustained periods.' Active learning occurs when children are motivated and interested. Children need some independence and control over their learning. As children develop their confidence, they learn to make

decisions. It provides children with a sense of satisfaction as they take ownership of their learning.

- Creating and thinking critically - we encourage and support children to have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things. “When children have opportunities to play with ideas in different situations and with a variety of resources, they discover connections and come to new and better understandings and ways of doing things. Adult support in this process enhances their ability to think critically and ask questions.” Children should be given the opportunity to be creative through all areas of learning. Adults can support children’s thinking and help them make connections by showing interest, offering encouragement, clarifying ideas and asking open ended questions. Children can access resources and move around the classroom freely and purposefully to extend their learning.

Good Health and Oral Health - All children are provided with a snack each day as well as being given the choice of milk. They have access to fresh water at all times. Meals provided in school meet nutritional standards and parents are given advice on ‘healthy’ lunchboxes for those who do not eat school meals. Children are also taught good hygiene routines within school to help them maintain good health, as well as being taught about good oral health.

The School Community

The routines in the Foundation Stage are clearly set out, giving children clear guidelines and expectations. They are still very flexible and change to meet the needs of the children. The Reception classes are more involved in whole school activities attending a weekly act of worship, becoming involved in more formal teaching of Phonics through the RWInc programme and Mathematics, as the year progresses. These more formal teaching sessions help to develop vital habits of learning: learning as a group, listening to the teacher, taking turns to answer, sitting still etc. St. Bernadette’s is a Catholic school with well-established links to the local church of Holy Family. We attend a termly service at the Church and the Church is also used as a resource when children learn about the locality in which we live. At St. Bernadette’s we embrace the Catholic ethos but also ensure our children learn about the wide variety of cultures and beliefs of other faiths within our diverse society, at an appropriate level for Foundation Stage children. The Governing Body take an active role in all aspects of School life and the governors liaise with the Foundation Stage team to ensure that they are fully up to date and kept informed of the changes and developments that affect Early Years.

Transition

Starting school can be a difficult time for young children; we therefore plan this time carefully to support children with the transition and to ensure it is as smooth as possible for each child and that they settle in to their new class quickly and happily.

Starting Nursery and Reception

Parents of all children starting in the next academic year will be invited to an Induction Meeting in the Summer term to meet their child's new teachers and other key staff and learn more about the Reception curriculum. This is an opportunity for staff to:

- Explain about uniform, PE kit and school dinners/ free school meals
- Explain about holidays and absences
- Purchase uniform and book bag
- Explain the arrangements for the induction in to Reception

New class sessions - The children are given an opportunity to come in to school to meet their new class teacher and other children in their class. They will spend an afternoon in their new class and children from our school Nursery will spend a day in Reception. This means that before they join their new class the Reception environment is already a familiar place to them.

Starting in Key Stage 1 (Year 1) - Throughout the Reception year, each child's involvement in whole school life will have been built upon; many of the teaching and support staff will already be familiar people to them. They will have taken part in Key Stage and whole school assemblies as well as sharing playtimes with the Key Stage 1 children. Children have the opportunity to meet their new class teacher and spend a day in their new class during the summer term.

Safeguarding and Welfare

(Please see whole school Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy)

All necessary steps are taken to keep the children in our care safe and well. Any safeguarding or welfare issues will be dealt with in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, and all members of staff in the EYFS are required to read this policy as part of their induction training.

Intimate Care - "Intimate" care is any care which involves washing, touching or carrying out an invasive procedure that most children are able to carry out themselves. See Intimate Care policy and Safe Changing of Soiled Children Policy for more detail.

Use of Mobile Phones and Cameras – See Computing Acceptable Use Policy

Monitoring and review

It is the responsibility of the Foundation Stage team to follow the principles stated in this policy. The Head teacher and Foundation Stage co-ordinator in conjunction with the Senior Leadership Team and Middle Leaders will carry out monitoring on the EYFS as part of the whole school monitoring schedule.

E.Finnegan

EYFS Co-ordinator

Updated October 2021